

# In the Beginning

A HIGHLY OPTIONED 1962 356 SUPER 90 IS RETURNED TO ITS ORIGINAL STATE.

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**Gerry's attention to detail includes a Hirschmann red tip antenna and Lietz luggage rack with leather straps. The slotted opening behind the rear window serves as a rain drain for the factory sunroof.**

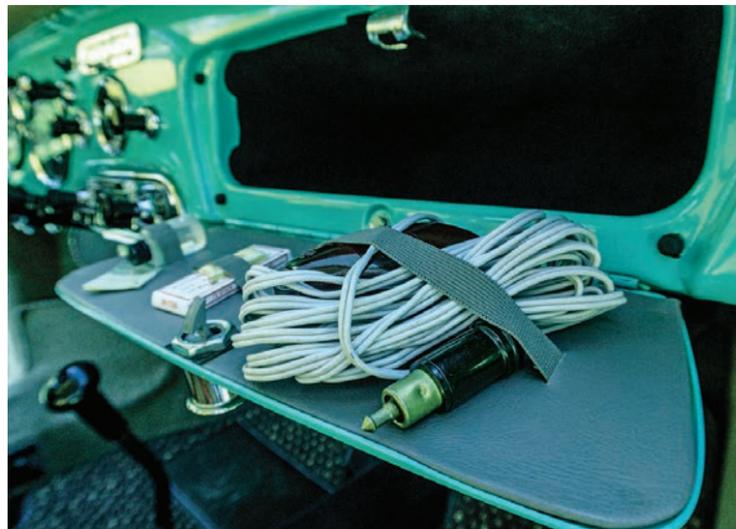
cause for embarrassment, and the engine, with its Weber carburetors and "big bore" kit, ran well. The panel fit was good. No rust was visible. Gerry did the deal, happily drove his new 356 back to Tampa, and canceled his trip to Miami. "This car was exactly what Beth and I were looking for—a nice driver to have some fun with and not take ourselves too seriously," he recalled.

Then things took an unexpected turn. "The car came with a bucketload of records, most of which seemed to be receipts for repairs and parts," Gerry reports. "Buried in those papers was a handwritten history of the car, along with a copy of the factory Kardex and original Certificate of Authenticity [CoA]." The Kardex and CoA listed an extraordinary number of options, 22 in all, most of which were MIA. Passing through seven previous owners will do that, but Gerry and Beth were unconcerned. "This was not a big deal at the time. The

car was intended to be a nice driver for my wife and me, right?" Well, almost. A bluish-green paint chip, taped to the CoA, piqued Gerry's interest.

Digging into the history of his T6, Gerry discovered that it was originally spec'd by a dentist and his wife who had a home on the Hawaiian island of Oahu, near Pokai Bay. Employing what was at the time known as the Porsche Tourist Delivery Program, the good dentist and his wife greeted their special car, number 119205, on March 28, 1962, at the Sonato Porsche dealership in Paris. After touring Europe for several weeks, the car was shipped to the United States, arriving at the Port of Charleston in South Carolina. Nothing in the pile of paperwork Gerry received indicated the 356 ever visited Pokai Bay; instead it appears to have remained stateside through multiple owners. Perhaps the Oahu residence was a second home for the original owners.





**REMAINING UNDER THE RADAR** with the 356 proved challenging. “As word got out about the car, which aside from the options was numbers matching, a few of my friends encouraged me to restore it,” says Gerry. “I was not new to the restoration process or to the concours arena. There are still a couple of Parade Preparation Group overall winners in my garage, but the last thing Beth and I wanted was another garage queen.”

However, like Eve’s apple, the thought of it was tantalizing. And that paint chip was *sooo* intriguing. The body appeared sound and amazingly straight. The engine would need to be returned to original specs, and locating the missing options or replacements would be challenging, but all things considered, the project looked easy. All that was needed was time and money. Ah, yes...that slippery slope! In 2015, the restoration began in earnest.

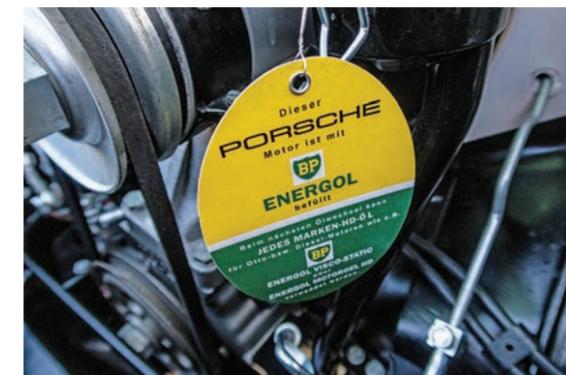
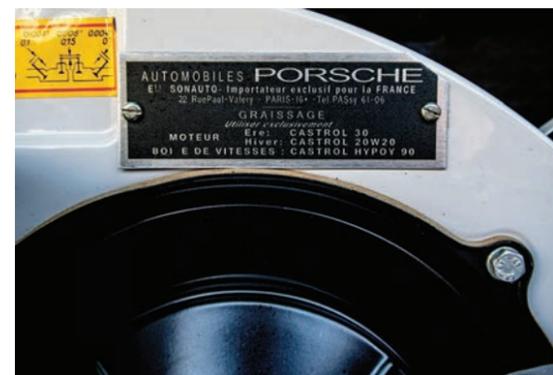
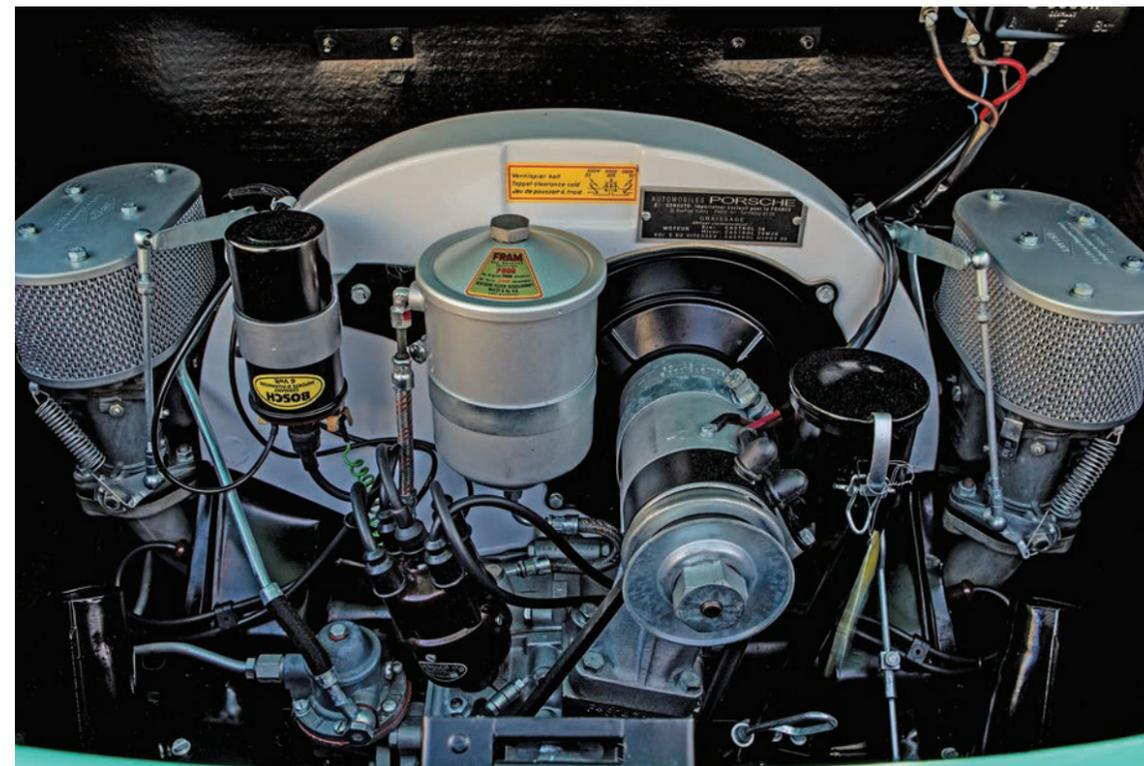
Once the car was disassembled, Gerry took some

parts to Tampa for his own handiwork. “I found and restored literally hundreds of items, from correct hardware pieces to shock absorbers, electrical items, trim, and manuals. Things like door latches and window lift hardware were cleaned, bead blasted, then zinc plated or painted. Fortunately, I had a fairly complete set of tools, including an air compressor, drill press, bead blasting cabinet, buffing wheel, and painting equipment.”

Additionally, he began to search for and source the options listed on the Kardex—all 22 of them. Gerry’s an architect by profession, a left brain and right brain kind of guy. Mixed with a bit of OCD, there was no possible way the restoration would come up short. His artistic side envisioned what the sea green S90 would look like; his logical, organized side brought that vision to reality.

A set of correctly dated wheels was found and sent to California for re-chroming. Auto International created

**The red dot switch to the right of the speedometer operates the red European foglight below the rear bumper. The Becker AM/FM/short-wave radio was a rare option for Porsche. A complete set of period-correct luggage was a swap meet find.**



the proper leather (light brown, color code C) interior. Pete Bartelli came up with a complete tool kit and travel kit. From the electric hand lamp (#9180) to the fire extinguisher (#9216), every optional item listed on the Kardex was eventually located. Gerry even found a complete set of factory luggage at a swap meet. "It is a correct option for this car. Very rare. I could not pass it up."

"One of the most challenging original options to find was the radio, a Becker Grand Prix AM/FM short-wave signal seeker," says Gerry. "Although a common item for Mercedes and BMW, it was not so with Porsche. It was the second most expensive option on the car—\$253 [in 1962]. I found a non-working unit in Italy for \$4,500 but passed on it. Finally found one in Belgium." The radio was restored by Becker USA in Newark, New Jersey with only minor modifications.

Solex 40 PII-4 carburetors and air cleaners replaced

the aftermarket Webers. A new wiring harness with correct bullet connectors was sourced. The transmission required thorough cleaning and painting, but no rebuild. Adding to the authenticity of the restoration was a complete NOS top end including pistons and unique black heads and cylinders.

Why black heads and cylinders? According to Porsche guru Karl Ludvigsen in volume one of *Excellence Was Expected*, the more powerful S90 engine generated more heat than the Normal and the Super. Porsche engineers surmised that, "Heat removal by radiation as well as by convection was helped by coating the cylinders and heads with a heat-resistant black paint."

**SPEAKING OF PAINT**, as mentioned earlier, the original owner wanted aqua green, and that's what she got. The paint formulated in Hawaii was shipped to Stuttgart and

then hand-delivered to Reutter. Although she loved it, the color didn't suit subsequent owners. Records show the fourth owner decided enough was enough and had the tub painted something more to his liking. "The car was painted red about 22 years ago. Notes suggest that owner thought the green color was 'putrid' and red was a better choice."

Gerry, being the consummate stickler for detail, decided to return the shell to its original sea foam hue. That's when those fluffy white clouds floating over the project turned ominously gray. "Everything was going great until the body was chemically stripped," he reports. "Thick Bondo was everywhere. Whoever did the previous bodywork used metal filings mixed in the Bondo to foil my magnet test and disguise incompetent metal work. At some point, the car had been hit hard in the rear. The firewall was badly rusted and both door bottoms were gone, as was the floorpan."

When the car returned from chemical stripping, it was decision time. Gerry and Beth discussed options. They could part out the car and junk the shell. After all, the parts market was strong and all the restored parts were in excellent, concours condition. With that cash, they could find the driver they wanted to begin with. Or they could use all the parts they had, find a shell, and build a 356. Another option was to continue down the road they originally embarked upon—moving forward with their pockmarked 119205. Gerry and Beth chose the path of most resistance, deciding to hang in there with the restoration. "We wanted to do right by the car and return it to the condition and completeness as originally delivered on March 28, 1962."

Work resumed. "Both pans were replaced. The driver's door was re-skinned and the passenger door bottom was replaced. The firewall was fabricated, as were

**The rebuilt Super 90 engine is authentic, down to its black heads and cylinders. The BP Energol hanging tag provides a reminder of which oil is preferable.**



Optional Fiamm Loadmaster dual trumpet air horns augment the standard electric horns. An original-equipment jack and complete tool kit and travel kit (in perfect condition, of course), are displayed in the trunk. The Gloria fire extinguisher, with its travel case, is another remarkable option.



the inside fender wells and the rear pan. Both front and rear NOS body clips were sourced from Germany. The headlight buckets and the battery tray were replaced.”

The Kanban process and just-in-time production were not in Porsche’s lexicon in the 1960s. Porsches were pretty much hand-built. If an extra switch was needed or an extra hole required, the folks who built the cars would find some way to accommodate. For a 356 with 22 options, certain accommodations were necessary. The hole in the dash just above the cigarette lighter, for example. “I found an early photo of my car with a red rear foglight in place of the normal back-up light. Although this was a U.S.-spec’d car, it was delivered in France with a red rear foglight. Research revealed that a red illuminated switch fit perfectly in the hole on the dash above the cigarette lighter. Mystery solved.”

To the left of the steering column was another small hole. Weird. “This car came with optional Fiamm Loadmaster dual trumpet air horns. When I bought it, it had a badly deteriorated set of regular Porsche electric horns. I tossed them out, thinking that the air horns replaced the factory horns.” Nope. “I found two original cars with the Fiamm horns option. Both cars also had the Porsche electric horns installed. A horn selector switch, to toggle between the air horns and the factory horns, was located where that little hole was.” Another mystery solved.

The restoration of Gerry and Beth Curts’ aqua 356B coupe was completed in 2018. It debuted at the 356 Registry East Coast Holiday in Ocean City, New Jersey. A stunner at any Porsche event they attend, their T6 coupe, with all its bells, whistles, and air horns, is the Curts family’s pride and joy. ●